

Time off for bereavement

Most people will experience the death of a person close to them (a bereavement) during their working lives.

Every person will deal with a death differently. It's important for employers to:

- be sensitive to what each person might need at the time
- consider the person's physical and emotional wellbeing, including once they've returned to work

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, employees have the same rights to time off when someone dies.

1. The right to time off

Anyone [classified as an employee](#) has the right to time off if:

- a 'dependant' dies, for example their partner, parent, child, or someone else who relied on them
- their child is stillborn or dies under the age of 18 – read more about the [right to parental bereavement leave](#)

If an employee's dependant dies

Anyone [classified as an employee](#) has the right to time off if a dependant dies, including:

- their partner
- their parent
- their child (if under 18)
- someone else who relied on them

There's no legal right for time off for dependants to be paid, but some employers might offer pay. Check your contract or workplace's policy.

How much leave can be taken

The law does not say how much time can be taken off if a dependant dies. It simply says the amount should be 'reasonable'.

This time off is for dealing with unexpected issues and emergencies involving the dependant, including leave to arrange or attend a funeral.

Read more about the right to [time off for dependants](#).

If an employee's child dies

From 6 April 2020, employees have a right to 2 weeks off if their child dies under the age of 18 or are stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy. This is called 'parental bereavement leave'.

Employees and workers might also be eligible for 'parental bereavement pay'.

Anyone classed as an employee also has the right to unpaid time off if their child (a 'dependant') dies under the age of 18.

Read more about:

- [parental bereavement leave and pay](#)
- [time off for a dependant](#)

If an employee or their partner has a stillbirth or miscarriage

If a child is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy, the:

- birth parent can get up to 52 weeks of statutory maternity leave or pay
- father or partner can get up to 2 weeks paternity leave or pay

They will both be entitled to 2 weeks parental bereavement leave after they finish their maternity or paternity leave.

Read more about:

- [parental bereavement leave and pay](#)
- [maternity and paternity leave and pay](#)

If a miscarriage happens in the first 24 weeks of pregnancy, there's no entitlement to maternity or parental bereavement leave. But an employer should still consider offering time off.

Employers should also:

- consider what's best for their employee, depending on their specific circumstances and needs
- [support their employee in the same way they would support them after a death](#)

Time off for a funeral

An employee has the right to time off for a funeral if the person who died was a dependant. For example, their partner or parent.

There's no legal right for this time off to be paid, but some employers might offer pay. Check your contract or workplace's policy.

If your workplace does not offer paid time off for a funeral, the employee and employer could agree on using:

- holiday or annual leave
- unpaid leave

Employers should not discriminate against employees when deciding on time off. For example, not allowing an employee to attend a religious ceremony after a death could be indirect religious discrimination. Employers and employees should agree together how an employee takes time off for both religious and non-religious funerals.

Pay during bereavement

There is no legal right to paid time off for bereavement, unless someone is eligible for parental bereavement pay when a child dies.

There are exceptions for agricultural employees – you can find out more by [calling the Acas helpline](#).

Many employers choose to offer pay during bereavement. An employer might call this 'compassionate', 'bereavement' or 'special' paid leave. The amount they offer is up to them so check your workplace's policy or contract.

The employer and employee could agree for time off to be taken as:

- sick leave
- holiday
- unpaid leave

If the employee takes the time off as sick leave or holiday, they should get their usual [sick pay](#) or [holiday pay](#).

If the person who died was not a child or dependant

There's no legal right to time off in these circumstances. Regardless of whether an employee has a right to time off, employers should be compassionate towards a person's individual situation.

Check your bereavement policy

If your workplace has a bereavement policy, it should say:

- when leave for bereavement could apply
- how much leave your workplace provides
- if leave is paid, and the amount of pay

This might be called 'compassionate', 'bereavement' or 'special' leave.

[Read more about what should be in a bereavement policy.](#)

If there's no policy

Employers can treat time off for bereavement as sick leave or holiday leave, depending on the individual circumstances. It's best for the employer and employee to discuss the options for taking time off.

[Employers can read about the benefits of a bereavement policy.](#)